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## READING IN RURAL DISTRICTS

BY MRS. MAY DEXTER HENSHALL, *School Library Organizer, California State Library*

Every school district in California from the most isolated mountain or desert district to the most populous schools in towns or in cities is provided by law with funds for library purposes. The total amount expended by the elementary schools for the year ending June 30, 1914, was \$160,011.03.

In the beginning trustees and teachers were left to use their own discretion in the selection of books and apparatus. The rural people were far from any library center. The school libraries of today bear mute evidence of the fact that the freedom to select books indiscriminately resulted in selection of books for the adults of the neighborhood while the children seemingly were forgotten.

In order that the children's rights should be regarded a law was passed providing that county boards of education should adopt an approved list of books and apparatus and selections could be made only from this approved list. This was a step in the right direction but still did not bring about satisfactory results.

County boards of education are very busy with their school duties. They have not the time to study books as they should in order to make approved lists that give the wide range of reading needed and at the same time exclude the undesirable material. Teachers change frequently in the rural schools. When the exchange of teachers occurs, the books and apparatus purchased by the first will often be disapproved or disregarded by the second.

Lack of right system, the least return for the money invested, absence of guidance in the children's reading and an unintentional but utter disregard of the important point that school libraries should be made an asset to the teachers and the pupils are facts any thinking person will admit upon inspecting an average school library.

Absence of the moving pictures and the various other attractions of the cities should give the rural children the time and the inclination to read, but personal observation and the testimony of many teachers and superintendents show that the great majority of rural children under the district library system are doing very little reading. They cannot, because the district libraries contain only a small percentage of books adapted to their needs.

The following is an actual list of books from a rural school in California and has many duplicates in other districts. It may serve to answer the question, "Are the children in rural districts reading? If not, why not?"

Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, Vols. 1 and 2.  
 Quintus Claudius, Vols. 1 and 2.  
 Gibbon's Rome, Vols. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.  
 Purpose and Success.  
 The Old Santa Fe Trail.  
 Theodore Roosevelt, the Citizen.  
 In the Lena Delta.  
 In Darkest Africa, Vols. 1 and 2.  
 Bancroft's Native Races of the Pacific States, Vols. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.  
 Milton's Poetical Works.  
 Practical Home and School Methods.  
 The Century Book of Facts.  
 The Wonders of Common Things.  
 Mistress of the Manse.  
 The Vicar of Wakefield.  
 Five Little Peppers and How They Grew.  
 Rab and His Friends.  
 Spectrum Analysis.  
 Decisive Battles of the World.  
 Gods and Heroes.  
 Red Riding Hood.  
 Polarization of Light.  
 Footprints of Time and Analysis of Our Government.  
 Darwin's Origin of Species.  
 Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.  
 Lives of Distinguished Females.  
 The Socialist and the Prince.  
 Tom Sawyer.  
 Don Quixote.  
 The Wonders of Science.  
 Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch.  
 Huxley's Anatomy of the Invertebrates.

The list contains four hundred books quite as interesting to children from six to fourteen years of age as most of the ones quoted.

Recognizing that a system that fails to give children children's books is wrong, four years ago it was made legally possible for the schools and county libraries to co-operate in order to give real library service to the schools. By this means the teachers and children have at their command an expert to advise and assist them in selecting their books. The trustees are given the power to authorize the county librarian to become their purchasing agent. The excellent selection of subject matter as well as the buying of good editions, attractive covers, and readable print has resulted in giving the children the desire to read.

A county superintendent that had schools receiving county library service wrote that upon investigation of about sixty schools he had found "The range of reading phenomenal." Another superintendent of a county not having co-operation between the school and the county library said, "Children in the rural schools are not reading because of lack of interesting books, limited library funds and poor selection of books."

A county librarian of a county giving library service to district schools stated that at the end of the sixth month of school she had furnished 7,216 to thirty-seven schools.

In the same length of time another county librarian had furnished twenty-five rural schools, transferring \$1,115.05, with 5,688 books.

The children's reading is guided in various ways:

(1) The librarian and teachers come into close contact through the librarian's visits to the schools and seeing actual conditions, and the teacher in turn visiting the county library and examining the books that will give best service to the children.

(2) Sending new titles and old favorites in good editions.

(3) Use of lists and model collections at teachers' institutes. A talk on editions was given at one time with books to illustrate.

(4) Use of printed lists.

(a) Selected list of stories based on Cleveland's "75 books of adventure."

(b) Distribution of the Pratt Institute library graded lists "What shall I read?"

(c) Pasting a brief descriptive note on the outside cover of the book.

(5) Use of sample collection of books.

(6) Having the children tell the librarian or teacher their favorite books.

(7) Special selections made by librarians for children who do not read often cause them to become interested in reading.

(8) Story telling by the librarian or the teacher.

(9) Giving a talk on a collection of new books sent to a school.

(10) Close co-operation between the teacher and the librarian results in establishing good reading habits among children.

Investigation of children's reading has shown that they like the realistic stories rather than the fairy tales. Burgess' "Bedtime stories" delight the younger children. "Robinson Crusoe" in a good edition, well illustrated, never grows old. The Walter Crane picture books are a joy to the children. The McLaughlin linen books are very popular with the little foreign children. The Coe and Christie Story Hour Readers, The Free and Treadwell primer and reader, with the Progressive Road to Reading following close after are favorites for school room use. Boys often ask for books on electricity.

The following list of books gives a fair idea of the books being sent by county librarians to teachers to aid them in their work and give the pupils the right reading material.

During the term the teacher will send in special requests for any other books desired by her or the children.

- Allen, Industrial studies: Europe.  
 Arnold, See and say series: Book 1.  
 Arnold, See and say series: Book 2.  
 Arnold, Stepping stones to literature. 3d reader.  
 Altscheler, Guns of Shiloh  
 Altscheler, Soldier of Manhattan  
 Anderson, Stories and tales  
 Baldwin, Baldwin's readers  
 Baldwin, Fairy stories and fables.  
 Blaisdell, Twilight town  
 Blanchard, Girl of '76.  
 Brady, Colonial fights and fighters  
 Burchill, Plan of work for the Progressive road to reading  
 Brown, Uncle David's boy  
 Burgess, Goops and how to be them  
 Burgess, More goops and how not to be them  
 Burgess, Mother West Wind's animal friend  
 Burnett, Little Lord Fauntleroy  
 Burnham, Descriptive stories for all the year  
 Carleton, Dorothy  
 Carpenter, North America  
 Carryl, Davy and the goblin  
 Coe, Story hour readers primer  
 Coe, Story hour readers Book 1.  
 Coe, Story hour readers Book 2.  
 Curtis, Marjorie's schooldays  
 Curtis, Play and recreation  
 Dinsmore, Teaching a district school  
 Dimock, Be prepared  
 Drysdale, Young supercargo  
 Fassett, Beacon first reader  
 Fassett, Beacon second reader  
 Gilchrist, Helen and the uninvited guest  
 Grinnell, Blackfoot Indian stories  
 Grover, Overall boys  
 Grover, Sunbonnet babies  
 Half a hundred stories for the little people.  
 Hamlin, Catharine's proxy  
 Harrison, Panama Canal  
 Heath, Heath readers 3d reader  
 Hunt, California the golden  
 Johnson, What to do at recess  
 Kipling, Just so stories  
 McDonald, Manuel in Mexico  
 Maeterlinck, Bluebird  
 Maxwell, Speaking and writing vol. 1-2.  
 Mills, Spell of the rockies  
 Maran, Kwahu  
 Morgan, How to dress a doll  
 Oswell, Old time tales  
 Peary, Snow baby  
 Perkins, Japanese twins  
 Potter, Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse  
 Potter, Tailor of Gloucester  
 Rankin, Adopting of Rose Marie  
 Roberts, Neighbors unknown  
 Robinson, At the open door  
 Ruskin, King of the Golden River  
 Sabin, Early American history for young Americans  
 St Nicholas  
 Serl, In the animal world  
 Sindelar, Nixie Bunny in workaday-land  
 Smith, Boy Captive in Canada  
 Smith, Boys and girls of seventy-seven  
 Smythe, Primary reader  
 Spyri, Heidi  
 Sneath, Golden deed book  
 Sneath, Golden door book  
 Sneath, Golden key book  
 Sneath, Golden path book  
 Sneath, Golden word book  
 Tappan, Children's hour  
 Tomlinson, Boy soldiers of 1812  
 Tomlinson, Red chief  
 Tomlinson, Three colonial boys  
 Tomlinson, Washington young aids  
 Wheelock, Birds of California  
 Wiltse, Hero folk of ancient Britain  
 Wiley, Wewanee the little Indian boy.

### LIBRARY WORK WITH FOREIGNERS

BY CAROLINE F. WEBSTER, *Library Organizer, New York State Library*

After listening to a most delightful discussion at the meeting of a literary club connected with a library in one of our inland villages on some of the striking biographies of the past two years, when the charm of "The promised land" was described with apparent feeling, "From alien to citizen" was referred to as a book that should be read by everyone who would know of the difficulties and hard-

ships of those who come to our shores with high hopes, and the marvelous faith that could not be shattered by the many disillusionings awaiting Abraham Rhibany on his "Far journey" was dwelt upon with fervor. And when this was followed by a discussion on Immigration it seemed advisable to give a practical turn to the meeting and suggest that the enthusiasm felt for these men and women could be diverted